

ITEM 7-C

HISTORICAL ADVISORY BOARD AGENDA REPORT

DATE: December 1, 2011

TO: HONORABLE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE
HISTORICAL ADVISORY BOARD

FROM: Laura Ajello, Planner II
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APPLICATION: **Certificate of Approval – PLN11-0340 – 1234 Hawthorne Street – Patricia & Alexander Bernstein.** The applicant is requesting a Certificate of Approval to allow removal of one Coast Live Oak (*Quercus agrifolia*). According to a Certified Arborist Report, the approximately 30-foot high, 25.7-inch diameter tree, located in the front left side of the property is in poor health with extensive decay.

ZONING DISTRICT: R-1, One-Family Residence District

GENERAL PLAN: Low-Density Residential

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The applicant requests a Certificate of Approval to remove one Coast Live Oak tree located in the side yard of a site on the Historical Building Study List. The 25.7-inch diameter tree is in poor health and its removal will be beneficial to the larger adjacent dominant oak. It has signs of decay in the roots and trunk. Staff recommends that the Historical Advisory Board approve the Certificate of Approval based upon the findings contained in the attached Draft Resolution.



Figure 1: Subject Property; Tree located along northern property line

BACKGROUND

The subject property is classified as a City of Alameda type "S" Historical Resource (eligible for listing in the State Historic Resources Inventory). According to Alameda historian George C. Gunn¹, this Tudor Revival residence was completed in 1901, the architect is B.E. Rummel, the builder was Brehaut & Cornelius; the original owner was Charles A. Hooper, lumber, S.F.; and there were no exterior alterations (at the time the book was

¹ Gunn, George C. *Documentation of Victorian and Post Victorian Residential and Commercial Buildings City of Alameda 1854-1904*, Hal Hershey, 1988. Print.

published). The lot size is 15,246 square feet (105 feet by 126 feet) per Alameda County records.

The applicant submitted photographs and a brief arborist's report from a site visit conducted on October 15, 2011 to evaluate two live oak trees (see attachment 2). The arborist recommended that the subject tree be removed because of decay that has damaged the roots, trunk and branches. Removal of this tree will also protect the healthy dominant oak tree.

STAFF ANALYSIS

Staff made a visit to the site on November 14, 2011. The subject tree is located in the left side yard and forms a large canopy with the second larger tree that stands over the carport and neighboring home at 1218 Hawthorne (see Figure 2). The two trees are approximately 5.5 feet apart at the official measurement height (4 feet above grade). The photographs submitted by the applicant show the subject tree trunk in close proximity to a larger tree, according to the arborist's report it has caused the larger tree to lean.



Figure 2: Subject Tree in Front (left)

Staff consulted with the arborist by telephone on November 15, 2011. The type of fungus causing the decay is unknown because no laboratory tests were run. The arborist believes the tree should be removed, it will further decline in health over time but there is no imminent danger of failure. Small support cables that were improperly installed some time ago were "choking the tree" and were removed by the arborist. The larger tree, which the homeowners wish to keep, will benefit and may be able to right it self with some new growth after the smaller tree is eliminated.

Pursuant to current City standards, the subject property is three times the required size of a residential lot in this zoning district. However, as shown in Figure 1, the lot is fully developed with a large home, detached garage, carport, and swimming pool. The applicant also submitted rough site plan, shown in Attachment 3, which also demonstrates the size constraints of the subject property. Given that a Coast Live Oak can grow from 20-70 feet high (with an even greater spread), existing lot coverage, and close proximity of neighboring historic structures, this site is inadequate to replant even a single Oak tree.

Due to the infeasibility of planting additional trees on site, staff recommends that the applicant submit a \$250 fee, equal to the cost of two 15-gallon trees for the purchase and planting of these trees on City-owned property.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

This proposed project includes the removal of one Coast Live Oak tree, which is classified as a resource in the City of Alameda. Section 13-21.7 of the Alameda Municipal Code (AMC) permits the removal of mature oak trees when it has been demonstrated that a tree is unhealthy or a threat to structures. The AMC requires replacement of Coast Live Oaks with a minimum of two new trees. Consequently, the project is Categorically Exempt from additional environmental review pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, Section 15304 – Minor Alterations to Land.

PUBLIC NOTICE

This agenda item was advertised in the Alameda Journal on November 11, 2011. Notices were mailed on November 10, 2011 to residents and property owners within 300 feet of the project location, the appellants, and interested parties who have requested to be notified of upcoming hearings for this address and/or project. Staff has not received any public comments on this project as of November 16, 2011.

RECOMMENDATION

Conditionally approve the Certificate of Approval based upon the findings contained in the attached Draft Resolution and require payment in lieu of replanting the trees.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED BY:

REVIEWED BY:

LAURA AJELLO
PLANNER II

MARGARET KAVANAUGH-LYNCH
PLANNING SERVICES MANAGER

Attachments:

1. Draft Resolution
2. Arborist Report
3. Applicant's Supplemental Information, Site Plan, and Photographs